



215 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE • Washington, D.C. 20003 • 202/546-4996 • www.citizen.org

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Contact: Symone Sanders (202) 454-5108
ssanders@citizen.org

Obama Administration’s Cynical Bid to Salvage the TPP by Turning a Blind Eye to Malaysia’s Trafficked Persons’ Mass Graves Will Only Fuel Criticism of the Pact

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a cynical bid to salvage the already-controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Obama administration today removed Malaysia from a list of the world’s most flagrant violators of basic human trafficking norms – two months after [the discovery of mass graves](#) for human trafficking victims in Malaysia, Public Citizen said.

In its annual [Trafficking in Persons Report](#) released today, the U.S. Department of State ignored TPP member Malaysia’s [documented deterioration](#) of human trafficking enforcement and upgraded the country’s human trafficking compliance status. [Members of Congress](#), [religious groups](#) and [leading U.S. and Malaysian human rights organizations](#) have rightly lambasted the decision as an indefensible maneuver to avoid a U.S. law that prohibits Fast Tracking the TPP as long as a country on the blacklist, like Malaysia, is a party to the pact.

“The administration knows that the TPP will have trouble in Congress, but turning a blind eye to Malaysia’s grave human rights violations in order to include Malaysia in the pact because it’s one of the few TPP countries we don’t already have a trade deal with and keeping the TPP on Fast Track so Congress’ oversight is limited is shameful,” said Alisa Simmons, deputy director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch.

The maneuver also will backfire, instead adding to the controversy surrounding the TPP.

“If the Obama administration is willing to ignore [people-smuggling camps](#) in Malaysia, why should we believe it would not also ignore TPP member [Brunei’s criminalization of homosexuality](#), TPP member [Vietnam’s widespread child labor](#) or TPP member [Peru’s rollback of environmental protections](#)?” Simmons said.

Today’s manipulation of Malaysia’s human trafficking record will only bolster criticism from [human rights](#), [religious](#), [LGBT](#), [women’s](#), [labor](#) and [environmental](#) organizations that the TPP’s touted human rights, labor and environmental provisions are mere fig leaves that would fail to actually curb widespread abuses among TPP members.

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